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ABSTRACT

Concern for the social psychological effects of military service, particularly its effect on authoritarianism and political conservatism extends to military training programs on university and secondary school campuses. This study examined the relationship between participation in a high school Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Program and political orientation and personality variables. Subjects were 30 9th-graders and 20 12th-graders enrolled in a JROTC program in a Florida high school and 36 9th-graders and 20 12th-graders not in the program. Subjects completed a demographic questionnaire, the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale Form E, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, a short test of awareness of current events, and a measure of political opinions. The results revealed no relationship between participation in JROTC and dogmatism, and no relationship between grade point average and JROTC affiliation. JROTC subjects reported higher self-concept scores and more liberal views than did their non-JROTC counterparts. JROTC and non-JROTC subjects did not differ in knowledge of current political events or in the number of school activities in which they participated. These findings suggest not only that JROTC participation is unassociated with an anti-democratic personality style and with conservative ideology, but also that it is positively related to healthy development of self-esteem. (NB)

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Ideological and personological correlates of participation in High School R.O.T.C.: Some good news.

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Ideological and personological correlates of participation in High School R.O.T.C.: Some good news.

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Concern for the social psychological effects of military service, particularly its effect on authoritarianism and political conservatism extends to military training programs on university and secondary school campuses, such as the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC; Segal & Segal, 1976). The present study was designed to examine the relationship between participation in a High School Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Program and political orientation and personality variables.

Method

In a cross-sectional design, participants included 30 9th-grade and 20 12th-grade students enrolled in a JROTC program in a central Florida High School and a comparison group of 36 9th-grade and 20 12th-grade students who were not in the JROTC program. The racial, gender, and social class composition of each of these four groups was mixed.

Students completed questionnaires during regular class hours that included the following measures: demographic background, the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale Form E (Rokeach, 1960), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Abbreviated Version), the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers & Harris, 1964), a 10-item multiple choice test of awareness of current events (e.g., "The Vice-President of the United States is..."), and a 10-item

measure of political opinions (e.g., "Foreign aid to other countries should continue"). The instruments and materials used are available upon request.

Results

JROTC affiliation (participant/not a participant) X Grade (9/12) X Gender X Social Class (middle/working) X Race (Black/White) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed a large number of statistically significant effects. Gender, Social Class and Race factors were pooled with error when no effects involving these factors approached significance. Only statistically significant effects involving the JROTC factor are reported.

Dogmatism.--Results indicated no relationship between participation in JROTC and Dogmatism. A marginally significant relationship between grade and dogmatism suggested that 9th-graders were slightly more dogmatic than 12th graders.

Conservatism.--JROTC students proved to be more liberal than their non-JROTC counterparts, particularly in the 12th grade. (See Figures 1a and 1b.)

Political awareness.--JROTC and non-JROTC students did not differ in knowledge of current political issues. A JROTC X Race interaction revealed that Black and White non-JROTC students did not differ in knowledge, but that White JROTC students were more knowledgable than Blacks JROTC students.

Self-esteem.--JROTC students reported higher self-esteem than non-JROTC students on the overall Piers-Harris score and on several subscales, and this effect was stronger in the 12th grade than in the 9th grade. (See Figure 2.)

Personality.--The Myers-Briggs data revealed that, on the judging-perceptive scale, 12th grade JROTC students were at the judging side of the scale (i.e., preferring a planned, decided, orderly way of life) and non-JROTC students were at the perceptive side, (preferring a flexible, spontaneous approach to life). 9th graders did not differ as a function of JROTC affiliation. (See Figure 3.)

Career goals.--Both 9th and 12th grade JROTC students expected to enter the military after High School and that 9th and 12th grade non-JROTC students expected to go to college. (See Figure 4.)

Grades.--Grade point average (GPA) was unrelated to JROTC affiliation and the demographic variables included in the study. A low but significant relationship was observed between GPA and two Piers-Harris subscales, behavior (r=.26) and status (r=.26).

School activities, hobbies.--JROTC and non-JROTC students did not differ in number of school activities. The single predictor of activities was parents' education: active students had more highly educated parents. JROTC and non-JROTC students reported no difference in interest in contact vs. non-contact sports, types of television shows, or styles of restaurants. JROTC students reported greater interest in science fiction films than non-JROTC students, whereas non-JROTC students preferred comedies.

Discussion

The present findings suggest not only that participation in JROTC is unassociated with an anti-democratic personality style and with conservative ideology, but also that it is positively related to healthy development of self-esteem. The only findings that run somewhat counter to this pattern are

the Myers-Briggs Judging-Perceiving data, which could be interpreted as indicating that by 12th grade JROTC students have acquired a structured, constricted "military mind," and the career goals finding that suggest that JROTC is an effective device for encouraging military enlistments.

Future research should employ a longitudinal panel design, with special attention given the problem of self-selection that may occur between the Freshman and Senior years within JROTC-related programs and the processes responsible for JROTC effects, particularly those involving enhanced self-esteem.

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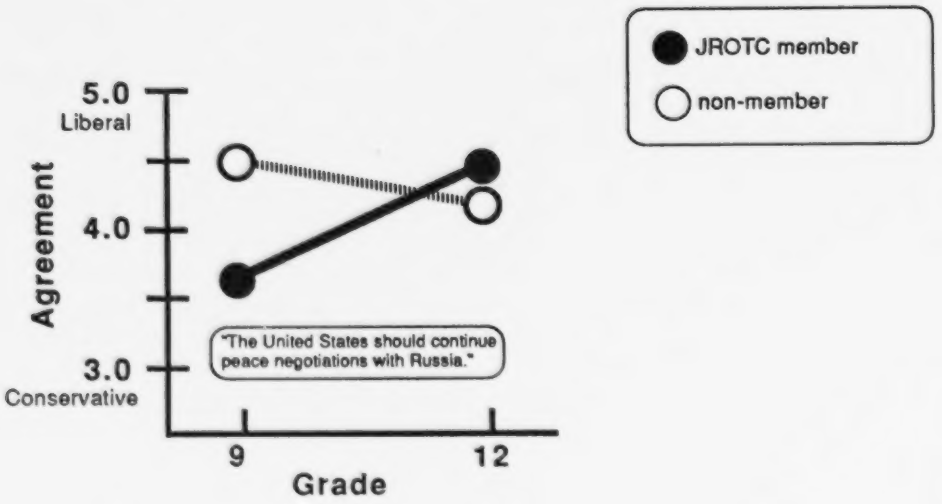

Figure 1a. Political opinions.

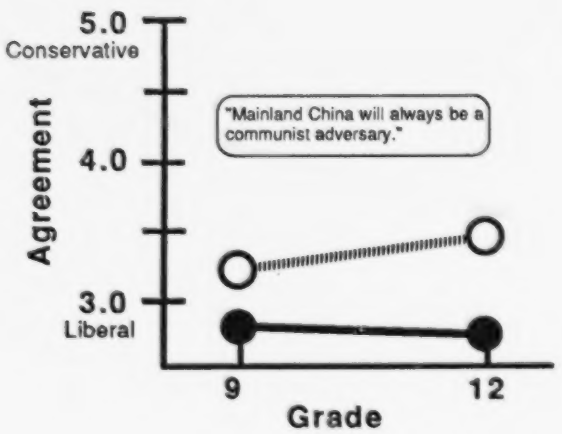

Figure 1b. Political opinions.

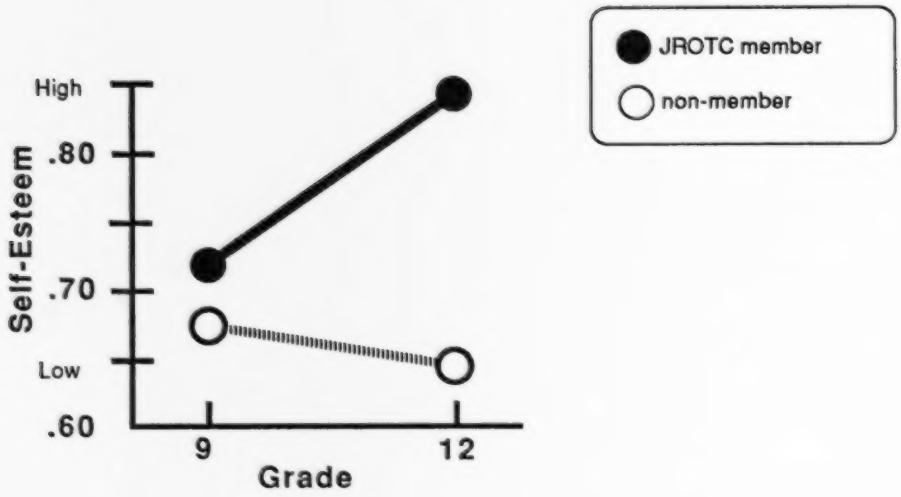

Figure 2. Self-esteem.

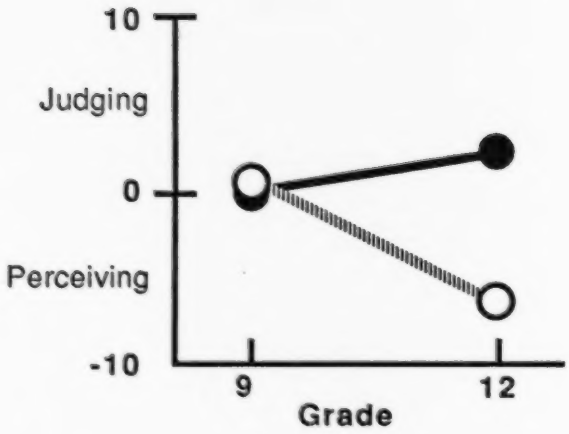

Figure 3. Personality.

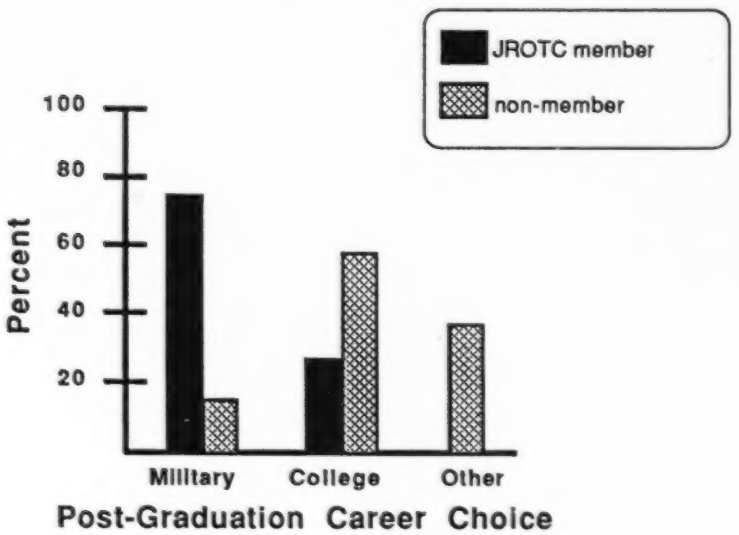

Figure 4. Post-graduation career choices.